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Sunday Reading.

ON THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD's SUPPER.

Sold by J. MARSHALL,
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MVSEVM
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On the SACRAMENT, &c.

HOW comes it that ſo many perſons who go regularly to public worſhip, nevertheleſs do not attend at the Sacrament? Are they right or wrong in turning their backs on this ſolemn ordinance? It is a queſtion well worth conſidering, and it is the intention of this tract to clear up, in ſome meaſure, this important ſubject.

I believe the principal reaſon which many people have to give for not receiving the Sacrament is, that they are afraid of it. "I think it an awful thing," ſay they, "to receive the Sacrament. I am fearful leſt I ſhould eat and drink my own damnation." To ſuch perſons we reply, have you ever enquired into the real meaning and nature of what you ſo much dread? Read the preſent tract Learn to underſtand what the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is, and when you know, then decide whe-

ther you will receive it or not. Let me here remark alſo, that the phraſe of "eating and drinking our own damnation" is a phraſe extremely miſunderſtood. It is borrowed from the Apoſtle Paul, but when the Apoſtle uſed it he applied it to certain Corinthians who got drunk at the Sacrament; and it is material alſo to obſerve, that by the word "damnation" the Apoſtle meant "condemation," and you will find, if you will read the paſſage that he alluded chiefly to certain judgments* in this world which the Corinthians brought upon them, ſo that even in their caſe he did not mean to declare, that there would be no room for repentance in this world, and no ſalvation in the next. It muſt be owned in like manner, or rather it ought to be ſolemnly inſiſted on, that every one who now communicates unworthily encreaſes his guilt rather than promotes his ſalvation; but ſtill he does not ſin paſt all poſſibility of forgiveneſs; and let it be remembered, that a man may ſin not only by communicating unworthily, but alſo by refuſing to communicate.

On the manner in which CHRIST *appointed the Sacrament of the* LORD'S SUPPER.

The beſt means of knowing what is the true nature of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is to

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* For this cauſe (namely becauſe ye eat and drink to your own damnation nor condemnation) many are weak and ſickly among you.

enquire

inquire into all that paſſed when our Saviour appointed it. We read, with little difference of terms, in ſeveral of the Evangeliſts, that our Saviour "on the ſame night on which he was betrayed, being at ſupper with his Diſciples, took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, ſaying, This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Likewiſe alſo, the cup after ſupper, ſaying, This cup is the New Teſtament in my blood which is ſhed for you." The Apoſtle Paul further obſerves, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come." From this ſhort and ſimple account, which is nearly all that Scripture ſays on the ſubject, we are to collect what was our Saviour's intention in appointing this Sacrament.

Now I think we are to underſtand, that he thereby meant to command all Chriſtians to meet together, from time to time, and to partake of bread and wine, in order to keep up among them the remembrance of this his laſt ſupper with his Diſciples, and of the ſufferings and death of Chriſt, which immediately followed. "Take eat," ſaid he, after having broken the bread, "this is my body." That is, this broken bread is to remind you of my body broken for your ſake. And ſpeaking of the cup he ſaid, "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Teſtament which is ſhed for many for the remiſſion of ſins." That is, this cup is to remind you of my blood being ſhed for the pardon (or remiſſion) of ſins. "Do this in remem-

brance of me." Theſe laſt mentioned words may be underſtood both as an entreaty and as a command. Chriſt your Saviour entreats you thus to remember him. Chriſt alſo, who is your judge and Lord, commands you to do it. The command is as plain as any other command of Scripture; and he who diſobeys one command of Chriſt may, with much the ſame reaſon, diſobey every other. It is, in ſhort, as if our bleſſed Saviour had ſaid, "I am now about to die for your ſins, and to riſe again for your juſtification, and I make it my laſt and dying requeſt that you, and all my Diſciples will accuſtom yourſelves to meet together, and to partake of bread and wine, as we have now done, in token of your bearing in mind my painful and bloody death, and in token alſo of your believing that I, who am now about to be crucified, ſhall hereafter come again, according to my promiſe, in power and great glory." "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come."

What it is to receive the Sacrament unworthily.

Firſt then, I think it is plain that to receive it ignorantly, is to receive it unworthily. This may very properly be called "not diſcerning the Lord's body." Groſs ignorance or error concerning the nature of the Sacrament, evidently ſhews a man to be unfit at preſent to receive it, and groſs ignorant

rance of the doctrines of chriſtianity is in like manner a diſqualification. This ignorance, however, is that which ſhould immediately be cured. Every perſon who is come to years of diſcretion ſhould be afraid of remaining a ſtranger to the Lord's table. He ſhould loſe no time in enquiring into the nature of it, and when he underſtands it, he is no more to be excuſed for abſenting himſelf from it, than he is for abſenting himſelf from the common public worſhip.

But next I would obſerve, that to receive the Sacrament in any reſpect, lightly and careleſsly, is to receive it unworthily. Some receive the Sacrament as a thing of courſe as ſoon as ever they arrive at a certain age; and at this ſame age perhaps they go and plunge themſelves into all the vanities and follies of the world, if not into its vices alſo. Some receive it becauſe they have a grave character to ſupport; ſome becauſe they are expected to receive it, and are aſhamed to refuſe to do ſo, having, for inſtance, a brother or a ſiſter who receives it from whom they do not care to differ; ſome from mere zeal for their own church, of which they ſhew themſelves ſteady members by receiving the Sacrament according to the forms which it has appointed: ſome from a confuſed mixture of ſeveral of the abovementioned motives; and ſome for the mere purpoſe of qualifying themſelves for a place under government. Thus, while many ſeriouſly diſpoſed perſons need to be encouraged to come to the Lord's table much more than is their cuſtom, it is to be feared alſo, that there are not a

few of our Communicants who in one way or other receive the Sacrament very unworthily.

Again, to receive the Lord's Supper ſuperſtitiouſly, is to receive it in ſome meaſure unworthily. Now a man receives it ſuperſtitiouſly who thinks there is ſome charm or unaccountable virtue in it, and who is not content with believing the Sacrament to be a means of Grace, in the ſame manner as Prayer or the reading of the Scriptures, or attendance on public worſhip. The papiſts go ſo far as to adore the elements of bread and wine, which they alſo fancy that the prieſt is able, by conſecration, to turn into the real and literal body and blood of Chriſt: and there are ſome Proteſtants who have not entirely eſcaped from the ſame error; for they fancy that there is ſome dark and myſtical meaning in the Sacrament, which however they cannot explain; and they are not aware that it is that plain and ſimple thing which we have deſcribed it to be. I am ſorry to add, that ſome ſuperſtitious Proteſtants imitate the Papiſts in another reſpect. They think that they have done a very meritorious deed when they have received the Sacrament; they have gone through what they call their religious duty, and in conſideration of this they fancy that they have now obtained a right to employ themſelves in any manner they think fit, and away therefore they go from the Lord's table into the world with minds full of ambition, or pride, or covetouſneſs, and the very Sacrament which they have attended ſerves to confirm them in the neglect of daily and habitual repentance, and to give a dangerous

gerous and falſe peace to their conſciences. There are perſons of this deſcription who prepare themſelves poſſibly with much ſolemnity for the day of receiving the Sacrament, and who even attend the ſervice with a face of great ſanctity and ſerioufneſs. It muſt, nevertheleſs, be laid down as a maxim, that whenever any one's life is quite at variance with every thing he profeſſes at the Lord's table, that perſon muſt be conſidered as a mere hypocrite and ſelf-deceiver, and as one of the worſt and moſt unworthy ſort of Communicants.

On the Self-Examination that is proper before we determine to receive the Sacrament.

St. Paul, after reproving the Corinthians for their profanation of the Lord's Supper obſerves, "but let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." In the Catechiſm of the Church of England we are inſtructed, what it is that may now be particularly required of Communicants; namely, "that they ſhould examine themſelves whether they repent them truly of their former ſins, ſtedfaſtly purpoſing to lead a new life; whether they have a lively faith in God's mercy, through Chriſt, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and whether they are in charity with all men?" Let every one then examine himſelf on theſe ſeveral heads, and more eſpecially when he is for the firſt time about to communicate.

communicate. Here, however, while we warn the careleſs not to be too ſlight in their ſelf-examination, let us alſo caution the ſerious not to be too ſevere. It is not required that a man ſhould have become free from ſin, nor that he ſhould even have reached to ſome great heights in religion, before he ventures to the Sacrament; for the Sacrament itſelf ſuppoſes us ſinful creatures, and is intended to cheer us with the hope of pardon through that death of Chriſt, which it ſets before us. Reader! if your heart is full of pride, or covetouſneſs, or impenitence, and unbelief, or if you are carried away by the love of the world and are cold and indifferent about religion; or if you are habitually given to any deceit or fraud, or to any ſecret wickedneſs, approach not to the Holy Table; but if the ſins I have ſpoken of are the very things which you hate, and if the mercies of God in Chriſt, are the ſincere deſire of your ſoul, then doubt not that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is intended for ſuch perſons as you, however weak your faith, and however ſmall your preſent attainments.

On the diſpoſitions which we ſhould feel at the time of communicating.

The Lord's Supper was ordained "for a continual remembrance of the ſacrifice and death of Chriſt, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." The

benefits which we receive from the death of Chriſt, are therefore one of the chief ſubjects on which we ſhould reflect when we are approaching the Table of the Lord. We ſhould conſider that we are now about to commemorate the death of that Savior who died for us, "the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God:" "who was wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our iniquities, and the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and by his ſtripes we are healed." "All we like ſheep had gone aſtray; but the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Let it never be forgotten when we go to the Table of the Lord that we ſhould go thither in the very character of ſinners. "In this reſpect there is no difference, for all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God, "being juſtified freely by his Grace, through the redemption that is in Jeſus, whom God hath ſet forth to be a propitiation through faith in his Blood, that he might be juſt, and the juſtifier of him who believeth in Jeſus." Chriſt is that "Lamb of God," a Lamb "without blemiſh and without ſpot," which has been offered up as a bleeding ſacrifice, and "which taketh away the ſins of the world." "Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you," and "this is my blood which is ſhed for you for the remiſſion of ſins." Unto him, therefore, we are to look, and through the exerciſe of this faith in Chriſt, and not "through our own works or deſervings," we are to hope for pardon. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Chriſt Jeſus, who walk not after the fleſh but after the ſpirit." "Therefore, being juſtified

tified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt." Such are ſome of the thoughts concerning our Savior's death, as well as the bleſſed effects of it, which the Scriptures teach us to indulge, and which are more peculiarly proper at the time of receiving the Sacrament.

On the Character and Conduct which becomes us after having received the Sacrament.

Preſuming the Reader to be a Member of the Church of England, we will here more particularly remind him of a few paſſages in the Sacramental ſervice provided by our Church. In that ſervice we are ſuppoſed to ſay, "We do not preſume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord! truſting in our own righteouſneſs, but in thy manifold and great mercies." Now have we been ſincere in uttering theſe words? Let us beware then how we afterwards talk of the innocence of our lives and the goodneſs of our hearts, and how we boaſt of our character and our honor as worldly people do; let us take care that we never put any part of our confidence in that righteouſneſs which we have profeſſed in thoſe words to renounce. Humility, meekneſs, patience towards others, loving kindneſs and charity, a diſpoſition to forgive injuries and to take reproofs without anger, contentment with our lot, and ſubmiſſion under the afflicting hand of Providence, all theſe are tempers which cannot fail to ariſe out of an habitual ſenſe of our unworthineſs

unworthineſs, and they are the tempers therefore which become a Communicant; nor is there any doubt that every ſincere Communicant will find theſe tempers encreaſe in him through his frequent attendance at the Lord's Table.

Again we are ſuppoſed, by another part of the ſervice moſt humbly to declare, "We do moſt earneſtly repent, and are heartily ſorry for theſe our miſdoings. The remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burthen of them is intolerable." But how falſe and hypocritical ſhould we ſuſpect ourſelves to have been in theſe words, if we ſeldom afterwards feel any ſorrow for our ſins, if we neglect the duty of habitual repentance, and if we pretend that Chriſt will ſave us, or that the mere Sacrament will ſave us, without our feeling in our hearts any great hatred of iniquity. Let us therefore never think, after we have pronounced thoſe words, that ſin can be counted too great an evil, that temptations to ſin can be too much avoided, that repentance can ever be too deep or ſerious, or that things in this reſpect can, as the world imagine, be ever carried too far.

Once more—we are ſuppoſed at the end of the ſervice each of us to declare, "and here we offer and preſent unto thee ourſelves, and ſouls and bodies, to be a reaſonable, holy, and lively ſacrifice unto thee." Do we then indeed and in truth thus devote ourſelves to God? To have ſaid theſe words, and to have repeated them again and again at the Sacrament, is to have done little. By theſe words it is meant, not only that a ſolemn ſervice

ſhould

ſhould be performed, and that a momentary feel
ing ſhould be expreſſed, but it is intended alſo
to imply that we purpoſe actually to employ all ou
powers and faculties, whether of body or of ſoul
our time, our wealth, our abilities, and our influ
ence in the cauſe of our Maker and our Redeemer
for "we are not our own, but are bought with
price;" A life really laid out in the ſervice of Go
is therefore to be expected in a communicant. T
redeem each precious moment of our time, b
employing it in whatever is our moſt proper an
moſt urgent work, to ſhake off our natural indolenc
and ſloth, and to go from the Lord's Table int
ſcenes of diligence and uſefulneſs: thus to join to
gether the love of God and of man, and to be activ
as well as to be devout, is to be conſiſtent in ou
character as Chriſtians.

If then we have attended at the Table of th
Lord, "let us not forget to do good, and to di
tribute;" for theſe alſo are "ſacrifices wit
which God is well pleaſed." Let us not only pou
out our hearts in prayer, but let us alſo emplo
our active powers in the Lord's ſervice. "L
us be ſteadfaſt, immoveable, always abundin
in the work of the Lord." Let us "keep unde
our body, and bring it into ſubjection." Let u
command our paſſions, and reſtrain our tongue
Let us alſo be punctual in our engagements, upright
exemplary. Let us be "zealouſly affected
every good cauſe;" and while we "viſit the f
therleſs and widows in their affliction," let u
take equal care that "we keep ourſelves unſpotte
from the world."

THE END.

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